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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on individual, semistructured interviews with 10 women academics in the field of higher education, who volunteered information about the contributions of spouse or partner on factors associated with scholarly publishing productivity. After a brief review of the literature related to the relationships between marriage, motherhood, and productivity, and a definition of the methodology, findings are summarized and highlighted by brief quotations from respondents that comment upon such matters as the partner's role in sharing childcare and household responsibilities, collaborating with the partner in the writing process, and having a place to write. The paper concludes that for some female scholars, having an academic partner plays an important role in sustaining their commitment to scholarly writing. A table summarizes (by year and author) explanations cited in the research literature for productivity of married women. (Contains 25 references.) (CH)

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The Perceived Contribution of Academic Partners to Women's Publishing Productivity

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This paper was presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education held in Memphis, Tennessee, October 31 - November 3, 1996. This paper was reviewed by ASHE and was judged to be of high quality and of interest to others concerned with higher education. It has therefore been selected to be included in the ERIC collection of ASHE conference papers.

ABSTRACT

Ten of 17 highly productive women academics in the field of higher education volunteered information about the contribution of an academic spouse or partner during an interview about the factors associated with their publishing productivity. In addition to providing feedback and reinforcement about the importance of writing, participants described academic partners in ways that underscored their role in developing a lifestyle, including space and time, to sustain a writing agenda. Findings suggest that some highly productive women writers perceive that an academic partner contributes to sustaining to publishing productivity.

The Perceived Contribution of Academic Partners to Women's Publishing Productivity

Very little empirical support can be found for the assumption that marital status or family responsibilities contribute significantly to explaining why faculty women publish less than faculty men (Finkelstein, 1984; Toren, 1991). Possibly because they largely have been framed in the discussion of sex differences in productivity, conceptual explanations about the relationships between marital status and productivity have failed to give much attention to the possibility that a long-term, intimate relationship with another academic may contribute, rather than inhibit, scholarly productivity. Such a relationship can be one manifestation of collegial exchange that has been found to be instrumental to scholarly productivity (Fox, 1985). Our understanding of the factors associated with women's productivity may be enlarged by exploring collaboration among spouses and partners.

Although notably less likely to be married than their male counterparts, faculty women are more likely to have a spouse who is also an academic (Astin, 1969; Astin & Davis, 1985; Cole & Zuckerman, 1987; Finkelstein, 1984; Hargens, McCann, Reskin, 1978; Sutherland, 1985). Unpublished data from the 1989-90 HERI Faculty Survey indicate that among academics who are married, more than two-fifths of the men and half of the women have a spouse or partner who also is an academic (W. S. Korn, personal

communication, June 6, 1996).

This paper has two purposes. The first is to examine the explanations offered in the research literature about the role of marital status and family responsibilities in women's scholarly productivity. The second purpose of this paper is to describe the ways that senior-level, female academics in the field of higher education with strong publishing records reported that an academic partner contributed to their publishing productivity. In the context of this study, publishing productivity is used to refer to the quantity of scholarly publications, including refereed journal articles, chapters, and books and monographs. Scholarly productivity is used to refer to a broader range of activities associated with faculty productivity. Academic partner refers to either a spouse or same-sex partner identified by the participant as a faculty member or member of the academic community with whom they share a household.

Related Literature

The Relationships Between Marriage, Motherhood, and Productivity

The majority of the findings from the research literature about gender and publishing productivity report either no significant effect (Hamovitch & Morgenstern, 1977; Helmreich, Spence, Beane, Lucher, & Matthews, 1980; Reskin, 1978) or positive effect for women of marriage on publishing productivity (Dupagne, 1993; Astin, 1978; Astin & Davis, 1985; Cole, 1979). Only a few studies report significant negative effects between marriage and publishing productivity for women (Astin, 1969; Fox & Faver, 1985).

The effects of marriage and children on productivity are almost always reported to be insignificant for men (Long, 1990).

Research is more inconclusive about the effects of motherhood on women's publishing productivity. Some authors have reported that the presence of children has a significant negative effect on women's publishing productivity (Dupagne, 1993; Hargens, McCann & Reskin, 1978; Helmreich et al., 1980), while others have documented no significant effect (Cole & Zuckerman, 1987; Hamovitch & Morgenstern, 1977; Reskin, 1978) or a significant positive effect (Fox & Faver, 1985; Kyvik, 1990; Toren, 1991). Several authors have pointed to responsibility for child rearing to explain the finding that academic women's productivity tends to peak later than men's (Astin & Davis, 1985; Kyvik, 1990; Toren, 1991).

Conceptual Explanations

As illustrated by Table 1, more than a dozen explanations are offered by authors of the research literature to interpret the counterintuitive finding that marital status does not significantly inhibit women's career productivity. This table is not presented to underscore the idea that productivity differences among single and married women are dramatic, but to identify categories of explanations offered in the research literature for the role of marriage and family responsibilities in women's scholarly productivity.

Most of the explanations offered in the research literature about the relationship for women between marital status and scholarly productivity identify individual characteristics and

practices related to handling family responsibilities. These include how women handle the time constraints imposed by a family or how a spouse contributes to managing household responsibilities and seem to reflect a bias about the imcompatibility of a career and family for women. Of the more than a dozen explanations that the author excerpted from the literature, only four explore ways that being married may impact job performance. These are primarily related to the impact of marital status on professional connections, such as access to a mentor.

Citations are listed in Table 1 in chronological, rather than alphabetical, order to illustrate that the authors of the most recent literature have done little to recast the explanations offered for the relationship between marriage and women's scholarly productivity. For example, Kyvik (1990) and Toren (1991) cite Fox and Faver's (1985) surprising suggestion that married women's higher levels of productivity might be attributed to greater health, energy, and stamina than single women.

Alternative Interpretation

The possibility that an academic partner may contribute to publishing productivity has been suggested, but not pursued, in the research literature. This is the case even though the few studies within the large body of literature about gender and productivity that include analyses of women's perceptions, have reported that women academics are not likely to support the traditional ideology that family life interfered with productivity and, are, instead, more likely to see the two as intertwined. For instance, Astin and

Davis (1985) noted that the highly productive women academics listed support from spouse or family as an important facilitator of scholarly productivity significantly more often than men did. Aisenberg and Harrington (1988) characterized their sample of women who persisted as academics as refusing to accept the dichotomy that marriage and work are fundamentally incompatible.

At least three authors have reported findings that suggest a link for some women between productivity and being married to an academic (Hunter & Kuh, 1987; Cole & Zuckerman, 1987; Long, 1992). Hunter and Kuh (1987) observed that 30% of a sample of prolific publishers in journals in the field of higher education were married to a person who had also published and that 63% of these people had co-authored publications with a spouse. Cole and Zuckerman (1987) noted that 80% of the employed women scientists from three doctoral cohorts were married to other scientists and that these women published on average 40% more than women married to men in other occupations. Similarly, Long (1992) described no significant sex differences in the collaboration patterns of biochemists receiving doctorates between 1950 and 1967, with the exception that women biochemists were much more likely to collaborate with a spouse on publications. Cole and Zuckerman (1987) hypothesized that "self-selection, congruence of values or the flexibility of academic schedules" (p. 125) may offer some explanation for the higher publication rates of women academics married to someone in a similar field.

Conclusions from these studies are only suggestive, however.

Cole and Zuckerman (1987) and Long (1990) utilized samples that are either largely or solely of scientists in the natural, physical, or biological sciences where publishing productivity is relatively high and the smallest gap is found in the publication rates of men and women (Finkelstein, 1984). Even in longitudinal studies of the career productivity of cohorts of academics, such as Long's study of biochemists (Long, 1990, 1992), marital status is used as a dichotomous variable, measured at a single point in time. Marital status is assumed to reflect family responsibilities, overlooking that single women may have significant personal obligations as well. The literature has failed to consider other than heterosexual unions.

Method

Participants

Population. Senior-level faculty in programs in higher education or student affairs with a reputation for having a substantial publication record were identified through an informal nomination process. Of the 31 interviewed, seventeen women and 7 men supplied a vita and met the definition of being highly productive described below. These included three minority women and one minority man. The sample was limited to a single field because there is evidence of substantial differences by discipline in the factors associated with scholarly productivity (Wanner, Lewis, & Gregorio, 1981).

Sample. When asked during a semi-structured interview to identify personal factors associated with their publishing

productivity, ten (n=10) of the highly productive women academics volunteered information about the contribution of an academic partner to their productivity and seven (n=7) either volunteered no information about the contribution of a partner to their productivity or they indicated that they were single or they described the contribution of a partner as negative. Participants volunteered very few comments about ways that an academic partner inhibited productivity. All the women who described their partner as contributing to their productivity identified their partner as a faculty member or member of the academic community. Men are not included in the discussion in this paper because none of the highly productive men who participated in an interview mentioned a spouse or partner in relation to their productivity.

For purposes of the analysis for this paper, highly productive women academics are divided into those who noted the contribution of a partner to their productivity and those who did not, according to what they said during the interview. These are identified in this article as contributing and non contributing partners. Some women who did not volunteer information about a spouse or partner are classified as having a non contributing partner and some are single.

Samples used to study scholarly productivity are often stratified by doctoral cohort group in order to recognize variations in the social context, including norms for productivity, that change over time. Among the sample used for this paper, there was at least one participant with a contributing partner and one

with a non contributing partner from each of the following five doctoral cohorts: 1965-69, 1970-74, 1975-79, 1980-84, and 1985-89. Although the sample is too small to make findings anything but suggestive, they come from women in doctoral cohort groups that span almost 25 years.

The experiences reported by this sample is most likely to be representative of the small group of scholars who contribute disproportionately to the knowledge production in the field of higher education. It is not necessarily representative of the experiences of the faculty who are not as engaged in scholarly writing or those who left faculty positions because of family responsibilities.

Measure of Publishing Productivity

In order to identify participants whose publishing level is in the top 20-25% of faculty from all types of colleges and universities, the author employed similar categories as those used by Boyer (1990) to report findings from the Carnegie Foundation Advancement of Teaching 1989 National Survey of Faculty. A participant was judged to qualify as being highly productive if she had published eleven or more journal articles, and/or eleven or more book chapters, and/or six or more books or monographs. Prolific writers are usually identified as those whose number of publications are in the top 5% of their field.

Although most of the research about scholarly productivity relies exclusively on quantity of journal articles as a measure of research productivity (Ward & Grant, 1996), a broader measure was

used in this study in order to reflect publishing productivity, rather than research productivity.

Number of publications were counted from the vitae supplied by each participant. Self reported data about publications has been found to be highly reliable (Creswell, 1985).

The mean, total number of publications for the 17 women in the sample was 40.06 (SD=15.47). The mean number of journal articles was 18.88 (SD=8.49).

Data Collection

Individual, semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant. The interviews were structured by an apriori scheme developed from the literature about the factors associated with publishing productivity. Interviews were tape recorded and verbatim transcripts completed.

Data Analysis

The contribution of an academic partner to publishing productivity was an issue that was raised during the very first interview and continued to emerge as one of many categories during subsequent interviews. The participants' comments seemed to frame the contribution of marital status to publishing productivity in ways that generally had not been presented in the literature. A number of participants, for instance, talked about co-authoring publications with their partners or how feedback from their partners about ideas was instrumental to their writing.

Therefore, after interviewing was complete, the author returned to the transcripts to recode them for themes that emerged

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in relation to the ways that an a spouse or partner was perceived to contribute to publishing productivity. While the fact that the interviews did not focus on this factor limits the extent that it was discussed and the ability to make conclusive remarks about it, the fact that the information was volunteered reinforces its validity.

Findings

Partner's Role in Family Responsibilities

As has been highlighted in the research literature about the scholarly productivity of women with family responsibilities, the issue of managing the time constraints imposed by young children was definitely raised by the participants. Most single women attributed their ability to write to a lack of distractions and that they did not face the time constraints imposed by family responsibilities.

Maintaining a schedule with distinct times for writing was a strategy employed by virtually all of the highly productive women in this study. However, participants often volunteered the most information about it when they described how they managed to establish themselves as a scholarly writer while juggling the care for young children. Most of the women described periods early in their careers when they were worked at home on large projects and did most of their writing after putting the children to bed. One woman described her schedule for writing in a way that was not uncharacteristic for the women in this sample when she said the following:

> I write mostly at night. My husband and I are really night owls. We are very strict about putting the kids to bed at nine. I write regularly between 9:45 and 1:15 four or five nights a week. I can't work on weekends because of my family responsibilities. There is no time during the day. I am very conscientious about devoting time to writing.

Although it was not uncommon for the married woman to note that their productivity came at the cost of time with their families, most observed that they developed a routine where there were clear boundaries between family and work time and that these boundaries were acknowledged by family members.

With one exception, participants did not attribute their productivity to a partner who assumed a primary role in child rearing or household responsibilities. One participant used the following words to describe her spouse's role in family responsibilities:

> Even though I have a husband who is an academic and who has been very supportive of my work and a partner in raising the children and managing the household, it is not equal. I have had more of our household and family responsibilities in every way...I have had to handle more of that than my husband.

Rather than contributing to productivity by dramatically reshaping traditional household responsibilities, the partners role for these women may most accurately be described as supporting, or at least not resisting, the woman's efforts to secure time to write. This reflects a valuing of women's work which probably comes from a

shared value system of people in the same profession.

Collaboration

During the course of the interview, eight of the ten participants with an academic partner who they described as contributing to their productivity talked about the ways the collaborated with this partners in the writing process. Feedback about ideas was the most frequent form of collaboration mentioned. Most noted that their partners read drafts of their papers or parts of their papers. One woman described the feedback she and her husband shared about each other's work in these words:

> My husband and I read each other's writing. We comment on each other's writing. When I have a puzzle that I want to figure out, I will talk with him. He will talk with me. We don't write together, but critique each other's work.

Five participants said that they had written, some over an extended period of time, with their partner. Women without partners generally described similar steps in the writing process, but their collaborative relationships were centered outside of the home.

Almost all of the participants in the study described the importance of interaction with colleagues who actively are engaged in writing and publishing. Often external to the institution, these colleagues help sustain a long term commitment to scholarly research and writing by reinforcing its importance. Some of the participants described their experiences in ways that suggested that their partner was a member of this community. One participant who is married to an academic, described their life in a way that

reveals how a culture that supports scholarly research and writing may be based in an academic partner:

> Most of our close friends are people who write and publish...We live a life surrounded by people who are writers. I don't mean great writers, but people who do research and publish articles and books. When we meet people, we say, what are you working on? What we mean is, what piece of scholarly or creative work are you doing.

While this type of relationship may be rare, it is clearly associated with productivity. It is possible that such as relationship is one way some women initiate a publication record without necessarily being located in an environment with colleagues or resources that support it and while mobility may be relatively restricted due to responsibilities for child care.

Space

One of the most interesting findings that arose from the interviews was the extent that many of the women spoke about the importance of having a place to write. Only one of the women who did not describe herself as having a contributing partner mentioned a place for writing, while more than half of the women with contributing partners talked about it, sometimes at great length.

While a few participants said they did not schedule routine times for writing, most said they needed large blocks of uninterrupted time to read, think, and write. One participant described writing as a behavior. She said,

> I think that there is a behavioral aspect to it. I tell my

students that. It is a behavior. You have got to have a place you go to write. My husband calls it my cave. And you have to have time.

Another participant described her working space in ways that reveal one very tangible way her partner expressed support for her work:

When I mentioned my husband being supportive...I have this wonderful room that he has helped to set up where I can work. I have book cases. I have a couch where I can sit down and read when I don't want to be at the desk. All of that is very important to me.

Even more vivid than the way some women described their space, was the way that three women described how they had crafted space at home to work jointly with their partners. When asked how she writes, one woman said,

I have to be alone or in the same study with husband at home. We share the same study at home. I write at home. I try not to answer the phone when I am doing it.

Another women who has co-authored two books as well more than 35 journal articles or book chapters, described how she managed to schedule time for writing said,

Part of it is that there is an atmosphere at home that is conducive to that in that my husband does the same thing. We both write. We have this huge study set up with computers and we sit and we write. That is how we structure our days.

Although few people are probably willing to so fully dedicate their

lives to their work, these examples illustrate the lifestyle choices some scholars make to write extensively and that some accomplish it by merging their personal and work lives.

It is likely that women academics with family responsibilities may be particularly sensitive to the time and space requirements for a career committed to writing because of the effort it takes to shape it. It seems likely that their sometimes extensive descriptions of their work space reflects the high value they place on their work.

Conclusions

Ten of 17 highly productive women academics in the field of higher education volunteered information about the contribution of an academic spouse or partner during an interview about the factors associated with their publishing productivity. While the size of the sample and its limitation to a single academic field limit the ability to draw definitive conclusions, findings suggest that for some highly productive female scholars, an academic partner may help sustain a commitment to writing by providing an important source of feedback about ideas, reinforcement about the importance of scholarly writing, and, in some cases, a writing partner.

Highly productive women who described themselves as having an academic partner who played an important role in sustaining their commitment to scholarly writing, repeatedly pointed to ways that they shaped their life at home so that they had time and space to devote to writing. They developed a routine that enabled them to devote time at home to their scholarship. This may be particularly

important for academics who do a great deal of their scholarly work at home. While not part of the traditional ideology about families which emphasizes a division and balance between work and leisure, this group of highly productive women with academic partners seemed to point to the merger of their personal and work lives as an element of their productivity.

"The world does not take kindly to a successful collaboration between a married couple," Phyllis Rose notes in the book, Parallel Lives (1984). Rose's description of the personal and professional partnerships of five, well-known, literary Victorian couples highlights experiences of co-optation or exploitation of women that were not voiced by the participants in this study. For instance, regardless of position in the list of authors, men are generally assumed to be the senior author in a publication that is co-authored with a woman (Ward & Grant, 1996). It is possible that the participants are understating or have forgotten the interference or obstacles that they faced from marriage and family responsibilities or, as Toren (1991) has suggested, that a sense of responsibility for a family is so internalized that it is unquestioned. Accepting the idea that an intimate, intellectual partnership can contribute to scholarly productivity requires acknowledging the validity of both perceptions and the words of women.

The most direct implications for practice from this study lie in the challenge to traditional nepotism polices. Institutions that prize research and publishing because of its relationship to institutional prestige may benefit by the increased productivity of

couples who share a research and writing agenda. By the same token, it reinforces the contribution of long term collaborative relationships to publishing productivity among academics who share a scholarly agenda without necessarily also sharing a personal relationship.

There has been little discussion in the research literature about long term writing partnerships among academics who share a private life. This may be because the focus in the literature has really been on the factors associated with men's scholarly productivity. It also may be because the literature about the effects of marital status on scholarly productivity has been framed by the assumption that marriage and family responsibilities provide one explanation for the lower productivity and success rate of women in academic positions. It is possible that there are some factors that explain the productivity of the relatively small number of women with substantial publication records without necessarily contributing to the understanding of men's productivity or for sex differences in scholarly productivity. Such relationships are most likely be instrumental in academic fields that do not require substantial resources, such as equipment, to conduct research.

Collaboration among couples who are both academics probably shares many of the qualities of a long-term collaborative relationship among colleagues. Research is needed about the extent of such collaborative relationships among academics in different cohort groups, as well as disciplinary variations and the

interaction with resources, reward, and reinforcement. The study of collaboration among partners challenges us to expand our definition of collaboration and to reassess the sanctity awarded to the division of the private and public sphere.

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Table 1

Explanations Cited in the Research Literature for the Productivity of Married Women by Year and Author

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Personal Characteristics and Practices

1. Reduce discretionary time and leisure (Hamovitch & Morgenstern, 1977; Cole & Zuckerman, 1987; Toren, 1991)
2. Spend less time on housework (Hamovitch & Morgenstern, 1977)
3. Control timing of marriage and/or children (Fox & Faver, 1985; Cole & Zuckerman, 1987)
4. "Assortive" or selective mating to scientists (Cole & Zuckerman, 1987)
5. Greater ability and/or motivation (Toren, 1991)
6. Greater health, energy, and stamina (Fox & Faver, 1985; Kyvik, 1990; Toren, 1991)
7. Energy and satisfaction from multiple roles (Toren, 1991)
8. Increased self respect (Kyvik, 1990)
9. More stable social life (Cole, 1979; Kyvik, 1990)

Issues Related to Job Performance

1. Access to male colleagues (Astin & Davis, 1985; Kyvik, 1990)
2. Likelihood of collaborating with mentor (Long, 1990)
3. Career paths similar to those of men (Astin & Davis, 1985).
4. Less likely than single women to have administrative responsibilities (Astin, 1978).

Characteristics and Practices of Spouse

1. Sharing of household obligations (Toren, 1991)